

OPINION

Media and politics: unhappy marriage that may do more harm than good

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When things go bad and arguments ensue, people are usually blaming politics, but should they be? We're often led to believe that politics are dishonest and evil, especially a particular party, opposite of your own personal choosing.

For the most part politicians do tell you what you want and need to hear to favor them. However, as intelligent human beings, most of us have come to expect that. Who do we believe however? The media. We read, listen and watch it every single day of our lives. We find sources we like and follow them like it's a religion. We do have the luxury and ability to choose which media outlets fit our beliefs and values, but we generally do not listen to other sources with the same

ear. It should be up to the media, news more specifically, to provide us with accurate information. This way each individual can be given the same information, regardless of which outlet they are tuned in to.

Politics and the media is an interesting combination. The sad news is that some decisions the government makes are based on the approval of American citizens. Now of course the average American does not have a direct vote as to whether or not the United States should go to war with Iran or pull troops out of Iraq, but their voices are heard in Washington.

This necessarily wouldn't be bad, but information given to the public is skewed, depending on which outlet the "facts" are coming from. National news stations or shows are heavily biased and depending on which you tend to agree with is the one you will

believe. Personally, I find myself on the democratic side, but I'm not here to tell you that President Bush is an idiot and Clinton or Obama would do a much better job. I'm also not going to defend the president and his republican party.

Politicians will always be accused of possibly misleading Americans, but the media needs to set a new standard. Originally, media was supposed to be for the people and provide them with the most current and accurate information. It was a nice idea to think honesty would be a value upheld by the media, but that is not the case.

The information viewers are given should not change from station to station and show to show. If they are opinion-based that is one thing, but actual news is another, with no gray areas in between. One station can't tell the public that 150 troops were

killed in battle, while another says only 15 were. People get confused and then make their decisions based on who is saying it.

This misleading of information causes people to reject or rally behind an idea given to us by the government.

If one show says we should attack Iran because they have threatened to bomb us first, some Americans will get behind President Bush and push for action.

Another show may say Iran has requested peace and the people who tune into that program will buy into that statement. Those people will then protest the idea of going to war with Iran.

Of course the government has the final say, via majority vote, but if an issue brings about strong enough emotions from the American people, the government might vote

accordingly. I know I don't want my opinion to be swayed by what I hear. I don't want one set of facts from watching one show and another from a different program.

Obviously some shows are meant to be skewed and funny, for entertainment purposes, but the real news sources should just that: real. Americans can tell the difference between entertainment and news.

The problem is the media is no longer making them different. Opinions are being presented as facts and until that changes people will continue to get fired up about things they really know nothing about.

It is up to the media to provide us with consistent information. Unfortunately I don't see that happening in the future because of the almighty dollar. It is nice to dream and maybe someday the media can be what it's supposed to be.

President's Corner



By **SAHAR SAFAEI**
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What's Up Penn State!? Hope you are all enjoying the last few months of this semester! Go out and support your Penn State Harrisburg Sport Teams! Flag Football anyone? A few events that are going on this month are: the Date Auction Hosted by the Black Student Union on November 1st and the dates will be attending the International Dinner, Hosted by International Affairs Association, on November 3rd, open to the public! So come out and enjoy the festivities.

With this "wonderful" rainy weather, and cold and flu season fast approaching it can leave even the most optimistic person in a gloomy mood. So here is a song that keeps me happy on a rainy day: Upside Down by Jack Johnson:

I hope everyone is excited for the winter break; it is a few weeks of nothing but snowboarding, lounging around, and hibernating. To make sure that you stay in peak physical health for the winter break here are few rules to help you beat that pesky flu:

• **Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly.** A quick rinse won't do the trick. To kill germs, communicative disease experts recommend washing with soap for 15 to 30 seconds—about as long as it takes to hum a rollicking verse of "Yankee Doodle Dandy."

• **Keep your hands away from your face** to reduce the chance of delivering viruses directly to your eyes or nose. One study found that people typically touched their face fifteen times in an hour.

• **Make certain you're getting your RDA for vitamin E** and other antioxidants including A, C and B-complex vitamins and minerals. These have properties that enhance immune response. Studies on older mice have shown that those with reduced levels of vitamin E were more susceptible to flu infection.

• **Don't smoke.** Smoke paralyzes the cilia, the hairlike cells lining the nose and airways that sweep incoming viruses away before they can infect.

• **Use tissues,** not cloth handkerchiefs, to reduce spread of infection.

• **Reduce stress.** Research has shown that immune responses are compromised by stress.

• **Get seven to nine hours of sleep a night.** Chronic sleep deprivation can reduce your immune response.

• **Reduce alcohol consumption.** Chronic heavy drinkers suffer from more colds and flu—and their complications than others do, and even regular moderate use of alcohol can compromise immune response.

Provided By Discovery Health.

Peace,
Sahar Safaei

Colbert for President; satirist enters the presidential race

By **MARUJA ROSARIO**
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On Tuesday, Oct. 16, satirist Stephen Colbert of The Colbert Report appeared on his own program and made an announcement that he plans on running for the office of the President.

Amid a shower of blue, red and white balloons, he shouted, "I'm doing it!" Colbert aims to get written onto the ballot of the Presidential Primaries in his native state of South Carolina.

Naturally, one must take everything Colbert says with a grain of salt. But this latest move has everyone questioning whether or not this man is serious.

Upon doing research, I learned that

the state of South Carolina's only statewide media outlet, ETV, has formally invited Colbert to begin his campaign on their airwaves. There are also phone calls made from The Colbert Report to the Democratic Party headquarters in South Carolina weeks before the announcement, but headquarters took it as a joke.

Facebook has started a group that already boasts of 1,000,000 members, and it only opened the day of Colbert's announcement. In comparison, it took an Obama support group nine months to gain 381,000 members. A Comedy Central poll has 80 percent of 27,000 people voting "yes" to putting Colbert in office. And Colbert has now taken to taping his show down in South Carolina.

Nation, I have to ask you, what

is democracy becoming? While I laughed when I saw the clip of his announcement, the smile quickly left my face. Because you all need to look into the future with me at what could be a very real problem.

Colbert wins South Carolina. He runs as an Independent in order to avoid getting backed by a party. He urges his followers to write him on the Presidential ballot. His followers, keep in mind, got a bridge in Hungary named after him, convinced Ben and Jerry's to make a Colbert ice cream flavor and stood at the border between Washington and Canada waving fish in order to get Colbert's eagle to return back to the zoo. Colbert campaigns hard and wins the minds and hearts of young people. Colbert wins the presidency.

Though I may be stretching a bit,

if anyone had the pull to make fun of democracy it is Colbert. And if he actually won the election, no civilized country would ever look at us with respect again. We fight already to keep our respect with the rest of the world, but a complete mockery of our election process, the very one we are fighting and dying to put in Iraq, would destroy our integrity and our pride as the great United States.

All things considered, Colbert has a point. This election has circled around a lot of indecision over whom to nominate for party tickets. Does it matter if he's half black, that she's a woman, or that he's a Mormon? In throwing his hat into the ring, he knows he does have national approval, something almost none of the other candidates can even pretend

to claim. He mocks our country's indecision and throws it in his face that they are not working hard enough to sway the voting public.

Yet even his fans think he might have gone too far. Though a bunch are all for Colbert 2008, just as many feel Colbert is tampering with something that he shouldn't touch. They hope that he gives up shortly after his primary election ends.

So Nation, no matter what happens, something is to be said about Colbert's brash attack on our country's politics.

I will keep my eagle eyes on his next few moves in the upcoming weeks. And in the meantime, take some time to look at the politics yourself and see if you wouldn't find yourself voting for Colbert come November.

Harmful toxins enter the air, yet the government is slow to stop the damage

By **ANNA USTILOVSKAYA**
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It's been said that the city air has tons of chemicals that are harmful to the human body, but little do people know just how harmful.

In a CNN.com report, Michelle Hammond and Jerimiah Holland were participants of a study which measured their body's chemical levels to those of their 18-month and 5-year-old children's. Through the use of biomonitoring, in which blood is drawn from the body in order to measure the levels of industrial chemicals, the couple found out that their children had seven times as much chemicals in their bodies than

they did, according to the article.

Toxins in the air that derive from fumes produced by buses, cars and even the material making up toys, plasticizers, make up and kitchen products, can cause harmful effects on everyone, especially young children, the article said.

This is why more and more kids are being diagnosed with asthma, birth defects and neurological disorders. The harmful exposure results in a greater burden for the human body which forces people, according to the report, to use more energy to breathe and perform everyday functions. In order to stay alive nowadays, people have to eat more, drink more and breathe in more air to filter our bodies, thus resulting in

obesity which is rapidly growing in America.

The CNN.com report said the most common industrial chemicals being detected in blood is polychlorinated diphenyl ethers (PBDE's) and phthalates, which cause thyroid dysfunction and neurological damage in lab rats.

With this being a study under 10 years in the making, who's to say what an 18-month-old child with two to three times the level of the amount of flame retardants found in lab rats, is going to face?

It is, however, clear that those most affected are children less than six years of age because their immune systems and vital organs are still in the process of developing.

Males in particular are in danger since research has proven that the prenatal exposure to phthalates in males can result in testicular dysfunctions and the abridgement of space between the anus and genitals, later resulting in infertility.

All this information really makes you wonder why the government isn't doing anything to stop this chemical exposure.

Well, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has yet to mandate companies to test their chemicals on humans in order to see the damaging effects it'll have.

According to the CNN.com report, although the agency has the right to require additional testing, it usually only does so on 10 percent of the

products, while approximately 1,500 new chemicals are discovered each year.

The EPA's response to this, the report continued, is its voluntary testing program in which chemical manufacturers can submit their products and the EPA will run tests on the 3,000 most widely used chemicals.

The only problem is that these tests don't measure health problems that result from these chemicals.

With annual birth rates averaging 14 every thousand people and 301,139,947 people living in America, we can only imagine how many of our citizens are constantly being affected. Something must be done.

National Insecurity: Santorum - and other dirty words

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My reason for writing National Insecurity is to put a light on a particular topic I feel has been ignored and hopefully energizes readers to examine the issue and act on their findings. For this reason, I have decided to up the controversy of my piece one more time in an effort to jolt a reaction out of this campus.

Last week, I came across something truly disturbing. The front page of last Monday's Patriot-News featured a picture of former Senator Rick Santorum and the headline "Santorum to Discuss Radicalism in Talk at Penn State". Having a vested interest in the University mentioned, I picked up a copy of the paper along with my usual New York Times. The article announced that Santorum would be speaking at University Park the following night as part of Islamofascism Awareness Week. Controversy arose from the fact that Santorum and other speakers, including Ann Coulter, would be visiting 200 universities and not necessarily discern between terrorists and members of the Islamic religion. Santorum is even quoted by the Patriot-News as saying "You have to describe the enemy as who they are... They aren't Irish Catholics, they're not Ukrainian Orthodox. They are who they are and their faith is integral

as to why they are doing what they are doing." While the quotes further clarified why Santorum is a former Senator, nothing said in the paper was all that far from his usual off-beat commentary. What I found truly disturbing was what I found when I looked into the organization providing the Nittany Lions with the distinguished honor of his speech.

Islamofascism Awareness Week is merely one facet of the Terrorism Awareness Project, a program put together by the David Horowitz Freedom Center. The vocabulary alone conjures heart warming images of the Forth of July, apple pie, and wetting yourself every time the evening news comes on - feelings which only suggest those one experiences when viewing their website: www.terrorismawareness.org. Here, the organization provides browsers with several other "featured presentations", including *Jimmy Carter's War Against the Jews*, *Jihad*, and *The Islamic Mein Kampf*. While I was certainly curious as to what the recipient of the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize and 39th President of the United States had against the Jewish people, *Jihad* looked much more intriguing. Upon clicking the link, my jaw actually dropped.

The combination of images and quotes, all of which could easily be real, was horrifying. For five minutes, one is bombarded with fire, blood, terrifying anti-Western

demonstrations and, of course, numerous photos of September 11th. Overwhelmingly, the feeling throughout that and every other presentation was that all Islamic people are terrorists and out to kill - you. Other parts of the site feature videos of beheadings and other "brutal rituals" as well as lists of suggested anti-Arab reading. One 'gallery' on the site even included nearly 40 pictures of the September 11th terrorist attacks, in case anyone forgot what those looked like. Burrowing deeper into the site, I nearly lost track of the fact that not only was a former US Senator receiving money from and speaking on behalf of these people, but also that he was coming to Penn State.

Interpreting the relative silence from the university is difficult. My best estimate is that no one really looked into the organization behind Santorum's visit. I have to believe that was the better choice considering the subjects I unintentionally came across while researching this piece. Having been voted out of office nearly a year ago, Santorum is irrelevant and who he is speaking for is not something the public needs to worry about. Regardless, the premise of an extremist with controversial views coming to speak at an American university was reminiscent of the September 24, 2007 question-

and-answer session with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at Columbia University. To Senator Santorum's credit, he is much more rational than Ahmadinejad, although their views on gays are probably similar.

Both of these events, which featured controversial speakers and views, are extraordinarily valuable to the American government and way of life. While it is true that Ahmadinejad is not protected under our Constitution and the first amendment, Columbia was right to extend an invitation to him and allow him to speak freely on their campus.

As Ahmadinejad himself is a controversial figure, many took to the streets to protest. Among those protesting, there were two basic categories. The first group was protesting Ahmadinejad's extremist views and absurd claims. The other group, I cannot help but feel missed the point. These are the people protesting Ahmadinejad solely because he was being allowed to speak on American soil and in an American university.

What the first amendment, specifically our freedom of speech, provides us is a vehicle to diversify our views and enhance our principles by contrasting them to other alternatives. Unfortunately, because my deadline pre-dated Senator Santorum's speech at

University Park, I am unable to comment directly on what he said last Tuesday.

In the case of Ahmadinejad, one got the opportunity to not only compare their personal views with a differing opinion, but that of an extremist. Some may argue that having such comments come from the platform of a respected university validates those perspectives or enables the speaker to persuade and convert the audience.

If an audience member was truly converted by that single speech, the individual was already going in that direction and it was only a matter of time. Others could use the experience to further define where they personally stood on issues compared to one extreme. The opportunity should have been seen as a chance to expand ones own educational experience, not bring the ever-more-nebulous War on Terror to U.S. soil. Hosting these controversial guests is a practice that should be encouraged by student bodies across the country. Under controlled circumstances, they provide fascinating views and occasionally a comment that everyone can't help but laugh at.

So, regardless of this being a week late, I would like to welcome Senator Santorum and the Terrorism Awareness Project to Penn State. I look forward to disagreeing with everything you have to say.